

Bengal Township Planning Commission (BTPC) Meeting Minutes February 23, 2022

Meeting called to order by Chairperson Lori Pung at 7:00PM

Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairperson Pung

Members present: Eric Boak, Kurt Koenigsknecht, Tom Miller, Lori Pung and Brenda Zlotek

Public present: Chris Khorey- Bengal Township Zoning Administer, Tom McComb- Bengal Township Inspector/Enforcement officer, Nick McDonald - Bengal Township supervisor, Kimberly Thelen, Brian Thelen and Richard Poljan.

Agenda: one addition per Chairperson Pung to add Township Inspector Salary review under old business "TERMS"

January minutes: Motion to approve with two spelling corrections noted by Eric Boak, second by Kurt Koenigsknecht-motion passed.

Township Inspector/Enforcement officer report from Tom McComb: continuation of working toward resolution of two Solar Array Zoning problems. One resident needs to submit a corrected sight plan to the Zoning Administrator. The other solar array issue needs to either move the array or seek a variance from the Township, this resident has had official letter of notification to show intent of resolution within 14 days or fines will be incurred. Mr. McComb has also spoken with Quality Solar related to the multiple issues the township has encountered with the company related to non compliance with the Township zoning ordinance, The Township Inspector is also working on two complaints of "junk" in the township, one is ongoing with the homeowner working on clean up the other has not been examined by the Zoning Inspector yet.

Zoning Board of Approval (ZBA) report from Kurt Koenigsknecht: no appeals last month, one appeal for a lot split variance is pending for the March Meeting. The ZBA is still in need of an alternate member.

Old Business:

- **Draft resolution of 2/15/2022** "An Ordinance amending the Zoning Ordinance for Bengal Township to clarify and revise the definitions on Junk, Nuisances, and Inoperable Vehicles, and revise Junk Prohibition and Freestanding Solar Energy Facility regulations" has been sent to the Township board which will be reviewed at the March 9, 2022 meeting and if adopted will be posted in a Newspaper announcement.

- Flowcharts, Applications, and Zoning newsletter** are all in progress.

- Building Permits** per Tom McComb are being issued from the county.

- Solar Research Master Plan Addendum- Solar Farms** document with potential changes was presented to the board from the Zoning Administrator Chris Khorey. Mr. Khorey reiterated to the board the importance of the Zoning Ordinance reflecting the master plan. The draft presented reviewed the townships current land use, amount of prime farmland as it relates to the current dairy industry along with the current business and residential housing in the township. He recommended the board consider a maximum range of total acreage for solar harvesting is set forth in the Master Plan to allow for adequate Dairy and cash crop farming to remain viable in the township.

Additionally, Mr. Khorey presented a draft of "Article 6 Solar Energy Facilities" potential amendment with the changes discussed at the January 2022 BTPC meeting, along with some further suggestions. The BTPC reviewed and discussed in detail the document section by section with Mr. Khorey providing guidance and answers to the BTPC member's questions and concerns.

Further discussion on this issue will be tabled until the April 2022 BTPC meeting (as two members will not be at the March Meeting). Mr. Khorey will make the discussed alterations to Article 6 Solar Energy Facilities for the BTPC to review in April.

BTPC member TERMS- Tom Miller agreed to continue his position until June 2022 and Kurt Koenigsknecht agreed to stay in his position until June 2024.

Lori Pung entertained a motion and Eric Boak so moved to recommend to the Bengal Township Board

the reappointment of Tom Miller to serve BTPC through June of 2022 and reappointment of Kurt Koenigsknecht to serve through June 2024, seconded by Brenda Zlotek, motion approved.

Township inspector salary review- the planning Commission along with the Tom McComb the Township Zoning inspector/Enforcement official discussed recommending that the Township board change Mr. McCombs compensation to a set salary instead of a per inspection payment which is what he currently receives. He will need a contract drawn up to be inclusive of the tasks considered reasonable and customary to be covered by an annual base salary, along with an additional possibly hourly range to include ancillary expenses (ex. court appearances) that may occur in the course of his duties as Township Zoning Inspector / Enforcement Official.

Lori Pung entertained a motion and Eric Boak so moved, to recommend to the Bengal Township Board that they budget five thousand dollars for annual Zoning Inspector/ Enforcement Official salary and expenses, seconded by Kurt Koenigsknecht, motion approved.

Public comment on Agenda Items:

Richard Poljan 1090 West Dill Rd Dewitt, MI 48820 presented the BTPC with some photos of a recently installed Solar Facility in Owosso and expressed his concerns related to setbacks and the amount of solar panel allowed in the township and crop production.

Brian Thelen 1163 N. Bauer Road St. Johns MI 48879 expressed his opinion on Solar facility owners that are currently interested in Bengal Township stating that to his knowledge are not planning on having battery storage facilities. Mr. Thelen also expressed that fencing should be high enough to keep deer out of solar facilities due to potential damage to the panels.

The BTPC thanked both gentlemen for their concerns.

Meeting Adjourned by Chairperson Lori Pung at 9:36 PM

Respectfully submitted by Brenda Zlotek
Bengal Township Planning Commission Secretary

Pending Approval
Approved _04_/27_/2022